

Warrant Committee FY06 Meeting Minutes
JUNE 21, 2006
7:30 p.m. CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL
COMMUNITY ROOM

Handouts: None

Other Attendees: Treasurer Carman, Assistant Town Administrator Jeffrey Conti, and Town Accountant Hagg.

Members Absent: Allison, Callanan, Curtis, Fitzgerald, Hobbs, Tillotson, Widmer

Meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

Minutes of May 17, 2006 and June 7, 2006 were accepted after changes.

TRANSFER REQUESTS

The Town Administrator submitted a transfer request for \$17,900 for the unanticipated expense of a search firm and assessment center for the hiring of a new Police Chief. BOS Chairman Solomon explained the process. The WC voted 10 in favor, one against (Member Hofmann), no abstentions.

A transfer request had been submitted by the School Committee in January for the costs pertaining to the failure of the oil tank at the Winn Brook Elementary school. This transfer had been tabled at that time until year end. School Committee Chair Gibson stated that the School Committee was withdrawing their request since a grant from the state has allowed Dr. Missal to shift funding internally within the budget to cover those costs.

BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE: CONTINUED DISCUSSION

All the committee chairs that are looking into the action items for the Blueprint for Change will be expected to make a short presentation to the WC at the meeting in September. Chair Jones stated that if the project requires a great deal of work, push that particular project to the bottom of the list.

Of all the projects being looked at, the health insurance will have the largest impact. Hagg had stated through an e-mail to the Chair that the cost of the GASB 45 actuary to provide "what if" scenarios without a clear direction is prohibitive and not budgeted. Chair Jones has requested that Hagg obtain an estimate from Ricci Consultants on their hourly cost to adjust their charts as various ideas are considered.

Ideas for non research related jobs: outsourcing. Meeting with department heads and request their input and ideas on how work can be done with outsourcing. If there are no direct labor relations problem with doing it why not get it done?

New sources of revenues. What are we now doing for free that we can be charging a fee?

Asset Management plan that lays out the next 20 years and the spending of funds to “save” the funds/buildings.

Consolidation has become larger. Younger has a fall goal for Building consolidation. A piece of that can be explored to see if this is something that we can explore going forward. There has been a tremendous amount of work already that has been done on this. This is now in the discussion of how we are going to implement.

Chair Jones encouraged the Committee to meet during the summer on their committees in order to meet the September “go forward plan” with the time frame. Timeline, resources needed, scope of work, opportunities, probabilities on implementation, etc. Immediate movement on those that present.

Jeff’s summary from the last meeting was sent and this will be forwarded to Members Heigham and Brusck by Jeff. This identified the point people for each project.

Vehicle subcommittee with Hofmann and Oates has already met.

Liz, Pat and Ralph met with the Recreation Commission and explained the charts. The Recreation Commission has stated that they do not believe the figures.

Member Oates asked about the core responsibilities. BOS Chair Solomon stated that this has not yet been zeroed in on.

Zero based budgeting has been requested by BOS Member Firenze. Younger will be going to the heads of police, DPW, and COA. He will be asking the new head of Police to be a test department. The City of Somerville had done this. Younger was going to contact the Kennedy School of Government for interns that may be helpful. Hagg stated that the new software will be allowing for budget detail that will allow for zero based budgeting to be done electronically. There will be lead time to bring up the system and then another period of time to train and learn how to do this new budget model. Hagg suggested that this be delayed until next spring. This does force everyone to look at what they are doing each year. Hofmann stated that this will be time consuming each year since every year items will have to be justified.

The COA had requested a new car as part of the capital budget but they had also applied for a grant. In the newspaper for the past few weeks, Springwell has advertised that they will provide free transportation if necessary to seniors for hospital visits all around Boston. Springwell does some homecare, food service. This was called Elder Services & is out of Watertown. This means that there is no reason to replace the COA vehicle.

Cemeteries – Member Heigham stated that the Cemetery Commission can set their own fees. Recreation may have exhausted their ability to raise fees.

There was some discussion of the percentage for benefits. Hagg stated that the last calculation was 30% average including everything except the unfunded health (GASB 45). Chair Jones asked about the returns on the retirement fund. Hagg stated that this information will be provided to the WC.

Treasurer Carman asked about the champion for each of the ten projects that will be done this summer. He stated that Chairs have been appointed but not champion. Member Doblin asked whether we should be winnowing down now or after the information has been gathered. She suggested that the whittling down be done in September not now. Chair Jones agreed and this was the focus of the beginning of the meeting when he stated that some of the projects require a great deal more research than others.

Member Brusch asked about the Belmont Housing Trust. WC has a position on this Committee but the position is not filled. This would feed information to the WC before future financial decisions go too far without feedback from the WC. The current WC appointment is not attending. The WC had pushed to have a member of this Belmont Housing Trust and now the Trust is running their meetings short and could use more active participants. This committee will be looking at affordable housing, Habitat for Humanity, McLean affordable housing. Geoff Tillotson is our current appointment and does not want to be reappointed.

Motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. by Member Heigham.